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INDIAN BANKS' ASSET QUALITY BEST IN A DECADE, TO IMPROVE FURTHER: RBI

Indian banks' gross non-performing assets ratio declined to a decadal low of 3.9% as of March 2023, while net NPA ratio plunged to 1%, it said

ECONOMY REMAINS STRONG, RESILIENT

According to the Reserve Bank of India's Financial Stability Report, released on Wednesday, the Indian economy and domestic financial system remain resilient, supported by strong macroeconomic fundamentals. The Indian economy has made solid recovery to become "one of the fastest-growing large economies amid heightened uncertainties", the report highlighted

FINANCIAL STABILITY NON-NEGOTIABLE: DAS

- "Financial stability is non-negotiable and all stakeholders must work to preserve this at all times," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said
- The report said profits of state-owned banks grew at a faster rate than that of private sector rivals. Also, the quarterly slippage ratio — the share of standard advances slipping into NPAs — moderated further to 0.3%

38.4%

GROWTH IN INDIAN BANKS' NET PROFIT IN FY23, LED BY RISE IN NET INTEREST INCOME

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NEET 2023 STATE 2ND TOPPER AIR 48

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SHAAMIK ABDUL REHMAN NEET: AIR 180

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RAHUL Y

ADITHI B N

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BHIM ARMY CHIEF SHOT AT IN UP'S SAHARANPUR

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

BHIM Army chief and national president of the Azad Samaj Party-Kanshi Ram, Chandra Shekhar Azad, was on Wednesday shot at by unidentified men in Saharanpur district of western Uttar Pradesh.

He was rushed to a nearby community health centre and later to a hospital. Police sources said Azad was in Saharanpur to attend a ritual at a supporter's place. The attack happened after Azad departed in his Toyota Fortuner.

The attackers were on a car that had a Haryana licence plate. They opened fire at Azad and a bullet brushed past him.

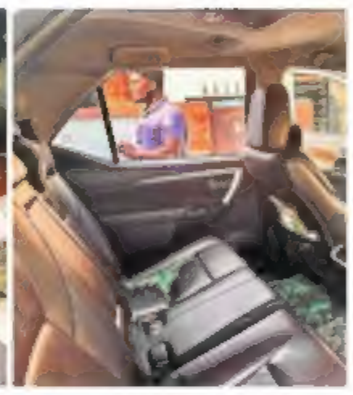
According to Senior Superintendent of Police of Saharanpur Vipin Tada, Azad's convoy was attacked by a few car-borne armed men. "A bullet grazed his stomach. However, he is stable and out of danger. Efforts are on to nab the assailants. The police will take strict action against them," Tada said.

Later talking to media persons while in hospital, Azad said five persons were in his car at the time of attack, including himself and his brother, who was behind the wheel. Other vehicles of his convoy were either ahead of his car or behind him.

"We took a U-turn as the assailants opened fire. Besides me, another person in my vehicle sustained bullet injury on his hand. I don't remember well but my people identified them (attackers)," Azad said. "I immediately called up Saharanpur SSP to inform him about the attack," he added.

The assailants fired four rounds from their white Maruti Swift Dzire, said sources.

The Bhim Army, in a statement, said the attack was a "cowardly act to stop the Bahujan Mission Movement". SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said if public representatives were not safe under the BJP rule, what would happen to commoners. "Jungle Raj in UP," he wrote in his Twitter post.



Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Azad gets first aid after his convoy was shot at; his damaged car (R); and (inset) Azad | PTI

District border sealed

The attack occurred around 5 pm near Union Circle under the Deoband police station area. "The borders of the district have been sealed and a massive operation to track the assailant and their vehicle has been launched," Superintendent of Police (City) Abimanyu Manglik said

Security strengthened

The police deployed additional forces near the district hospital where Azad was admitted to tackle any situation. Director General of Police Vijay Kumar sought a detailed report from the Saharanpur police

Anna Bhagya turns 'Paisa Bhagya'

Until required quantity of rice is procured, govt to pay money to beneficiaries

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

NOT wanting to compromise on the July 1 deadline to roll out the Anna Bhagya scheme even as they face problems in procuring rice, the Karnataka government on Wednesday decided to give money instead of additional 5kg of rice to each BPL card-holder in the state as a temporary measure.

While the scheme will roll out on July 1 as decided, the government is planning to invite tenders to procure rice.

Until they get sufficient rice, they will pay Rs 170 to each BPL card-holder, which is equivalent to 5kg of rice at the rate of Rs 34 per kg. "We had promised to give rice from July 1. We need 2.29 lakh MT of rice every month. But till we get the required quantity of rice, we will pay Rs 170 per beneficiary per month," Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said after a cabinet meeting on Wednesday. The government needs Rs 750 crore to Rs 800 crore per month to implement this scheme.

BJP slams government

The BJP on Wednesday slammed the government's decision to give Rs 34 per kg for additional 5 kg of rice under Anna Bhagya scheme. "The Centre is already giving 5 kg rice and the state should give 10 kg as promised," former CM Basavaraj Bommai said | P4

Food and Civil Supplies Minister KH Muniyappa said they made several attempts to procure adequate rice from other states. They also sought rice from central agencies, but the rate was higher than that offered by the Food Corporation of India (FCI), which was a fixed rate of Rs 34 per kg. That is the rate that the state government wanted to stick to. Muniyappa said the tender process to procure rice will be through transparent means and any agency can take part. "We will finalise it at the earliest. We will give rice for sure, but it may be delayed," he said.

"More than 95% of our cardholders' names have been linked with Aadhar cards. Remaining will be done at the earliest. We will have their account numbers through Aadhar and the money will be credited to their bank accounts. This will not take more time and we will complete this process by July," he said. P4

Anti-Rahul post: Nadda, Malviya booked

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

AN FIR has been filed against BJP national president JP Nadda, BJP IT Cell chief Amit Malviya and BJP Chandigarh state president Arun Sood for posting an animated cartoon of former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on social media on June 17 accusing him of trying to divide India.

The High Grounds police in the city registered the FIR on Wednesday on a complaint by Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Priyank Kharge and KPCC communication wing co-chairman Ramesh Babu.

"We got the FIR registered because the video says Rahul is playing a dangerous game. More dangerous are people who are pulling strings of #Raga like Sam Pitroda. Staunchly anti-India, they leave no stone unturned to defame India overseas, just to embarrass PM Modi," Ramesh Babu told *TNIE*.

CONTINUED ON: P4

HC won't quash FIR against Rahul, Jairam

The Karnataka High Court has refused to quash the FIR against Congress' Rahul Gandhi, Jairam Ramesh and Supriya Shrinate over alleged copyright infringement by using a song of movie 'KGF - Chapter 2' for the promotion of Bharat Jodo Yatra | P4

E-WAY

CLOSED FOR BIKES, AUTOS

Two-wheelers, 3-wheelers, agricultural vehicles like tractors, and cycles will not be allowed on the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway from mid-July |P3

Chandrayaan 3 set to take off on July 13

DONNA EVA @ Bengaluru

EXACTLY 14 days from now, India will launch its third unmanned mission to the Moon, Chandrayaan 3. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) officials on Wednesday confirmed that Chandrayaan 3 will be launched at 2.30pm on July 13.

Initially, ISRO Chairman S Somnath had stated that the window that the organisation was looking at for the launch was between July 12 and July 19. However, it has been confirmed by officials that the launch will take place on July 13 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota.

Chandrayaan 3 is the third mission under the Chandrayaan mission aimed at proving India's space capabilities. Chandrayaan 3, unlike its predecessors, will not have an orbiter, but only a lander carrying a rover and a propulsion module that will take the two up to 100 km of the lunar orbit.

ISRO scientists told *TNIE* that the launch date and time had been chosen based on a specific window. The window of July 12 to July 19 was given because of various factors, including weather, the distance of the Moon from the Earth and the positioning of the Moon in its orbit around the Earth. The specific time was decided taking calculations into consideration for Chandrayaan 3 spacecraft to make its rendezvous with the Moon after its initial earth orbits.

The launcher identified for Chandrayaan 3 is GSLV-Mk3, which will place the integrated module in an Elliptic Parking Orbit of 170 x 36500 km around the Earth. According to the mission profile released by ISRO, the integrated Chandrayaan 3 (propulsion module, lander and rover) will make five orbits around the Earth before transferring into the lunar orbit, where it will make seven orbits before landing on the Moon. P9

BAIR-STOWS AWAY PROTESTER

Jonny Bairstow (background) wrestles a protester to the ground while Benn Stokes and David Warner try to stop another from invading the pitch with orange powder during the second Ashes Test at Lord's on Thursday. Two protesters from Just Stop Oil ran out of the Grandstand and onto the outfield sprinkling the group's trademark orange powder | P17| AFP

AAP backs UCC, Akali Dal, AIMPLB to oppose

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi / Lucknow / Chandigarh

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a fervent pitch for the nationwide implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) extended its 'in-principle support' to the UCC while the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) and the Shiromani Akali Dal opposed the move and said they will present their views before the Law Commission.

UCC refers to a common set of laws applicable to all citizens regardless of their religion, and deal with marriage, inheritance and other personal matters.

The AAP said while it supports the UCC, the code should be brought in with a consensus after consultations with all stakeholders including political parties and non-political entities.

"Some issues can't be reversed in future; some are fundamental issues so it is not correct to adopt an authoritarian approach. There should be a consensus. If you implement it without consensus, it will upset and anger a large number of people," said AAP national general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak.

PM Modi had on Tuesday made a strong push for UCC, asking how the country can function with dual laws that govern personal matters.

Reacting to the PM's viewpoint on the code, the AIMPLB said it will oppose any such plan. "AIMPLB will oppose the Uniform Civil Code tooth and nail. We are chalking out a strategy to counter the proposed move of the government by presenting our view in front of the law commission more powerfully," said AIMPLB member Maulana Khalid Rasheed Firangi Mahali.

The AIMPLB had called an urgent online meeting late on Tuesday night, where members came to the conclusion that the UCC is neither necessary nor beneficial to the country in any way. Maulana Khalid also questioned the timing of the PM's announcement ahead of the 2024 general elections.

Meanwhile, the BJP's former ally Shiromani Akali Dal said rushing the UCC could harm the social fabric and the concept of unity in diversity.

CHINKS IN OPPN UNITY

The Aam Aam Party's announcement comes at a time when most opposition parties have come out against the very idea of UCC, and shows the chinks in opposition unity ahead of the 2024 elections

XPLORE Travel

Take time out to **Xplore** our redesigned back page. In today's theme, *Travel*, you have all you need to know on Sri Lankan cruises and other hot tips for holidays.

—Editor

Woman guard forced to drink dirty pool water

PRAVEEN KUMAR @ Bengaluru

IN what can be termed as an inhuman act, a 25-year-old woman security guard was forced to drink dirty water from a swimming pool at an apartment complex in the city on June 14. Employed by a leading facility management company at Rajarajeshwari Nagar, she was sent to the apartment complex on Devarachikkanahalli Road at Bommanahalli for work. She was put in-charge of the swimming pool area.

One of the residents of the apartment complex, who came to use the pool, started shouting at her after seeing the dirty water. When she told him that she was on security duty and had nothing to do with pool maintenance, he caught hold of her and made her drink the dirty water from a bottle.

Unable to bear the humiliation, she quit her job and filed a complaint against the accused, identified as Akash, in Bommanahalli police station on Monday.

In her police complaint, the victim, a resident of Hongasandra, stated that the incident occurred around 11.30 am on June 14. He even closed the gate of the swimming pool and prevented her from leaving the spot, she alleged.

The incident came to light after the victim complained to security supervisor Anikesh Chakravarthy and maintenance manager Mallikarjun. When Chakravarthy and Mallikarjun questioned Akash about his indecent behaviour, he is said to have told them to drink the dirty water.

"The complainant has stated that the accused humiliated her for no reason. She even informed the matter to the maintenance manager who assured her of bringing it to the notice of the office-bearers of the residents' welfare association," said a police officer.

"A notice has been sent to the accused to appear before the investigating officer. The victim stated that she was waiting for the response of her higher-ups to her complaint. Because of this delay, she could not file a police complaint immediately after the incident," the officer said. Meanwhile, Rakesh from the facility management company, told TNIE that the woman security guard quit her job and he has no information about the swimming pool incident.

Bommanahalli police have registered a case.